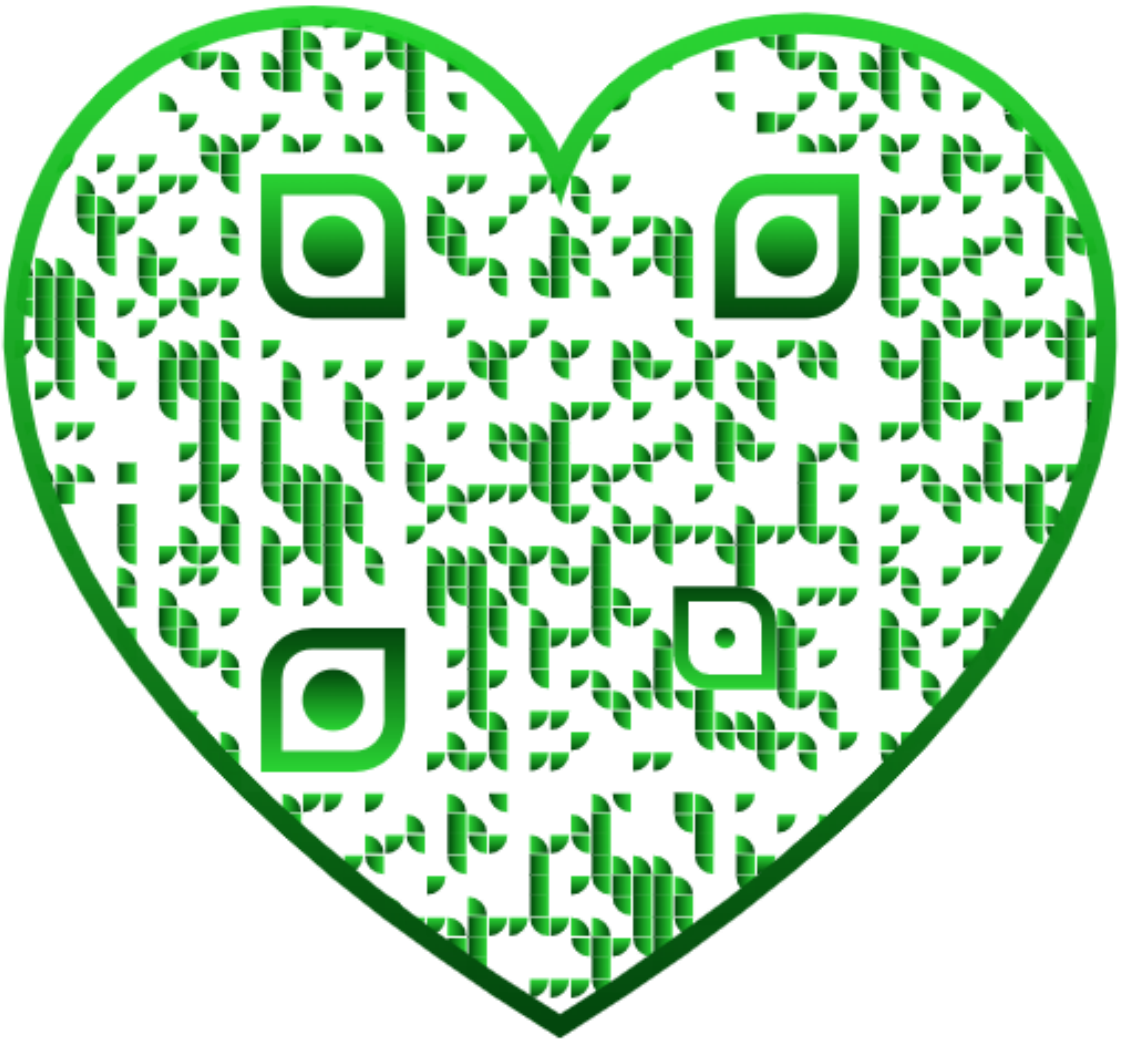
BREAKING PORN ADDICTION Through REWIRING YOUR BRAIN

Neuroplasticity forges new brain patterns, giving hope and help no matter how deep the habit

PAUL CRAWFORD



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"If you really want to change, the key is in the re-programming of your mind."

Rom 12:2 Paraphrased

“At last, a book to help men in an area that is increasingly more common. I pray for so many men with issues around porn, and to be able to recommend a wonderful tool like this is fantastic.”

Geoff Wiklund
Senior Pastor, Eden Assembly of God
Promise Keepers, Board Member
Auckland, New Zealand

“Paul Crawford has done a great job in bringing clarity to a difficult topic in this easy to read book. It will be a powerful, practical, and vital tool in the hands of men, many of whom are desperate for a way of escape from the vice-like grip of porn addiction. This book is realistic, doable, non-judgmental, full of hope, and backed up by years of successful experience.”

Tak Bhana
Senior Pastor, Church Unlimited
Running With Fire
Auckland, New Zealand

“Paul Crawford's book Breaking Pornography Addiction is both a description of the techniques used to help men overcome addiction to pornography, and a guide for those men who are seeking to be freed from this obsession. Included are descriptions of various ways men may become infatuated with pornography… and techniques used to effect freedom from this addiction. The book balances straight forward explanations of the science and psychology of treatment with helpful tips and guidance for the reader. It provides hope for those who may find their circumstances hopeless because of this powerful threat to their wellbeing.”

Cecil D. Price, MD
Director
Wake Forest University Student Health Service
Winston-Salem, NC 27109 USA

INTRODUCTION

"Cocaine habits are no different from tea and coffee habits and patients can quit it cold turkey."

Dr W A Hamilton (1828 - 1900)

Surgeon General to U.S. Army

History proves that what is sometimes thought of as mild and controllable, can become a societal problem of significant proportions.

Since the explosion of the Internet, the use of and addiction to pornography (porn) has increased exponentially. The effects of this are only now becoming increasingly evident. For those who find themselves addicted, this book will give you hope as you not only understand pornography addiction, but also learn empowering strategies to challenge and overcome it.

An example of the disturbing impact of internet pornography was shown when the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) interviewed 700 children for a study in the UK. They found 12% of respondents admitted to making an explicit video. Almost one in 10 (9%) also said they were worried that they had become addicted to pornography. A further one in five children (18%) said they had seen pornographic images that had shocked or upset them.

This easy to read eBook follows the story of several men on their journey to freedom from porn addiction. Each man's story illustrates, teaches, and gives hope and help to those facing a similar addiction. It will also inform and assist those seeking to help someone who is trying to get free from this addiction.

After many years working as a pastor, Paul Crawford (the author) now works as a pastoral therapist/coach, helping men of various ages battling this relationship-destroying addiction. He writes with wisdom, insight, and the passion of one who wants to impart understanding that will empower both change and freedom.

Following a certain number of 'steps to freedom' sounds like a great solution to any addict. However, until an individual understands the ways in which their

mind is not only justifying, but also supporting their habit, such steps only mock them.

This is a book for those who want to understand why this addiction holds them (or others) captive, and how to find a way out. It is a book that will give you hope as you not only understand pornography addiction, but also learn empowering strategies to challenge and overcome the mind-sets that support it. In this book the term **neural bonding** is introduced. Established neural bonding will be explained and illustrated as the main anchor of this addiction in people's lives. Then we will go on to show how changing neural bonding, not just using 'try harder', is the key to success in breaking this bondage.

This is NOT a book about morality but about personal freedom and relationship healing. It is not a book for those (and we assume their significant other) who are OK with having a pornography habit or addiction alive and well in their life. It is a book for those who want a way out.

Before moving on to the content of this book let's look back at an important lesson from history.

William Alexander Hammond was the first American physician to devote himself entirely to neurology, and was one of the founders of the American Neurological Association. During the American Civil war he was the Surgeon General to the United States Army. Of the relatively new drug being used in medical practices of that time, namely COCAINE, he made the comment:

> *"that cocaine habits were no different than tea or coffee habits and that patients could quit 'cold turkey'."*

Let us consider how this played out in the decades that followed, as we look at the emerging rampant use of pornography in our current society.

About the Author

After almost three decades working in pastoral and leadership roles, Paul retrained and now works in a counselling practice with his wife, Lynette. With a significant portion of Paul's counselling and life coaching work being helping men caught in the grips of pornography addiction, he has developed concern for the endemic nature of this addiction and passion to provide answers and strategies for those who want to change. In this growing internet age Paul also carries deep concern for the young boys and youths who hardly stand a chance of not being exposed to pornography in their most impressionable years.

Paul likes to keep it real, be practical and provide workable solutions. His experience with men on their journey toward sustainable freedom is captured in the pages of this easy to read book.

Paul and Lynette live and practice in Albany, New Zealand and also counsel across New Zealand and worldwide by phone or Skype.

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CHAPTER ONE: Magnitude of the Problem

Pornography addiction is sweeping the male world at an alarming rate. Since the advent of internet porn, this would have to be one of the most virulent addictions facing the modern world. It is captivating boys and teenagers, who then become men that can't kick the habit. Men find themselves in relationships with wives or partners where, even if they do enjoy a satisfying sex life, they still seem powerless to resist the call of the internet fantasy.

Even though it's not a valid diagnosis (yet) according to the current Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5), pornography addition is a real enough problem that it can cause physical changes in the brain. It's a type of compulsive, uncontrollable behaviour that can have deep ramifications in one's life and affect professional and personal relationships alike. You don't have to take my word for it. Here are some numbers I'm sure you'll find interesting.

- Until the recent rise of social media, pornography was actually the most common use of the internet.

- Though statistics vary throughout a number of studies, on average,

    About 12% of all internet sites are pornographic.

    25% of search engine requests are pornographic in nature, and

    35% of all downloads are pornographic.

In every second, over $3,000 is being spent on pornography.

It is hard to calculate the profits from the porn industry, but worldwide it is estimated to be in the tens of billions of dollars.

Sadly, the statistics look even worse in a context of the family.

- Children view their first porn site at the average age of 11.

- The words "sex" and "porn" are among the top searches for children under

eighteen, which is where porn addiction usually has its roots.

- Each day, 116,000 searches are submitted for child pornography. This industry, disturbingly, generates $3 billion each year.

Mankind has always been fascinated with sex, as evident from sexual depictions dating from the Stone Age. But the ease of access nowadays is making it a serious issue. This wouldn't be such a problem if websites actually required age confirmation, but only 3% of them are age-restricted.

It doesn't stop there. Approximately 10% of porn-viewers admit to having a problem controlling their urges. They have the need to watch pornographic content even when they're in healthy relationships. It extends way beyond the scope of personal relations, though. Many have lost their jobs due to accessing pornographic websites at work. The need for a 'fix' is stronger than the fear of getting caught and/or fired. This sort of behaviour is consistent with traditional addiction.

As if ruining professional and intimate relationships weren't enough, there's more. In a study at the University of Cambridge, it was revealed that this sort of addiction can also diminish normal social relationships (as admitted by 80% of participants), as well as loss of libido and erectile dysfunction (reported by 60% of participants), resorting to escort services excessively (15%), spending large sums of money on sexually explicit content (15%), suicidal thoughts (10%), and more. There might be a correlation between the first viewing age and developing those behavioural patterns, as the study found that on average, the individuals with compulsive sexual behaviour had viewed explicit content at an earlier age. (Study of Neural Correlates of Sexual Cue Reactivity in Individuals with and without Compulsive Sexual Behaviours (PLOS ONE, 2014*).*

In a 2008 study it was found that 93.2% of male participants had seen explicit pornographic content before the age of eighteen, many of which were exposed between the ages of fourteen and seventeen (CyberPsychology & Behaviour, 2008). Viewing porn at such a young age has the power to completely shape their idea of sex, as well as dominate their desires. Teenagers who watch porn frequently develop the idea that this is what real sex looks like and try to replicate it once they begin to engage in intercourse. Their expectations of their

sexual partners are completely modified by the artificial environment viewed in adult movies and videos. They also learn that when they become bored with one 'sexual experience' they can readily move on to another.

One of the other impacts of porn use on teenagers is that they don't have to learn to 'manage' their emerging sexuality and frustrations in healthy ways. Such healthy management skills would keep them in reality and prepare them for their future meaningful and long-term, intimate relationships.

The previous statistics are hardly surprising. As you can see, pornography addiction is a wide-spread phenomenon which is only getting stronger. Even though it doesn’t share the same characteristics as substance addiction, in many respects there are some parallels between the behavioural patterns of these very different kinds of addiction. For example, just like a tolerance is developed when it comes to substance addiction as the body adapts to the changes introduced by the said substance, similar effects are observed with porn addiction. The need to get a higher quantity of the 'fix' is consistent in both types of addiction. Ignoring consequences and thinking only about instant gratification is another obvious similarity. Hence, getting over the addiction is incredibly difficult.

Is there a way to get free?

Yes.

This book will show you why men are so hooked, and will give practical steps toward freedom - until you have understood the 'why', you can never apply the 'how to's' of change.

One of the keys you will quickly realize in the battle with this addiction is that it's not one's testosterone levels that are keeping them hooked, it's their brain. The key to change is understanding the power of our neural programming and the way to change this.

Your thought processes have the power to physically alter your brain (and the other way around, of course). This phenomenon is known as neuroplasticity. For a long time neuroscientists believed that the brain was a mostly static organ and after a certain developmental period in childhood, it stopped changing at all. The last few decades have been eye-opening. We now know that the brain is not a rigid construction, but it changes all the time. Everything you experience, see, hear, or read, alters your neural network ('neurons' are the cells responsible for your brain's activity through their connections), thus physically changing your brain. However, this process is much more intense at a younger age. As we get older, some neural connections strengthen, so it gets harder to change them. This doesn't mean that it's impossible, though.

Later in the book we will expand on the effect of neural bonding on one's journey into addiction, and then it's place in your journey out of it. Think of neural bonding as the forming of molecules.

I recall a science experiment where our teacher filled a balloon with hydrogen, floated it in front of the class and then put a lighted candle to it. BOOM, we had an explosion which made the girls scream and the boys excited. Our reactions were not the point of the experiment - the point of the experiment was that we now had droplets of water on the science lab floor. Water had formed through 2 hydrogen atoms 'bonding' to individual oxygen atoms. This invisible 'bonding' created a new molecule that would take a lot of energy to break.

In the same way, the addiction to porn is about bonding. It is not just about

sexual excitement. The brain has bonded other benefits, or experiences, or justifications to the use of porn. When we discover what these are, and can counter them with specific and superior alternatives or realisations, the habit or addiction can be broken.

Specifically we will look at neural bonding in the context of:

- Beliefs and mis-beliefs. Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), Misbelief Therapy, and some other therapy models have highlighted the power of subconscious beliefs in determining our behaviours, attitudes and reactions. In the case of addiction to pornography, we have to discover the beliefs we have attached (or bonded) to its use before we can have any hope of changing firstly that belief, and secondly the resulting addiction.

- Mental fusions. These are different from mis-beliefs because these are the benefits we have mentally bonded to the use of porn. Very often these fusions don't belong together, but the neurons have become fused or joined. For example, for the man who fused porn use to comfort as a boy or teenager, he will go to porn for comfort when he knows he is possibly going to lose his job, his marriage, or his children's respect because of this addiction.

- Justification factors. This is something I have discovered when working with men who know this habit violates their belief system, or their view of who they see themselves as. They have bonded a 'justification factor' to their use of porn which makes it 'OK'.

More about each of these neural bonds later, and, more excitingly, how we can use this tool to work for us in breaking the habit.

Neuroplasticity is where the path to sustainable change lies. You are able to overcome anything by conditioning yourself properly, and physically changing your brain. Even though it will be hard, you can overcome addiction to pornography and lead a much more fulfilling, happier life.

Quick Points In This Chapter:

- Since the internet age has swept our world, pornography use and addiction is increasing at an alarming rate.

- Boys are being introduced to porn at a disturbingly young age.

- The impact and consequences of pornography use is becoming clearly documented by academic studies

- Neural bonding has to be understood and used to break this habit

- Neuro-plasticity is a relatively new science that is giving understanding and hope to those who want to change

CHAPTER TWO: The ‘Characters’

One thing I find frustrating when reading a novel is the way characters are introduced early in the book and then don't appear again for several chapters. Occasionally, when I can't pick it up from the context, I find myself thumbing through those earlier chapters to remind myself who that character is.

On your journey through this book you will meet a number of 'characters'. These are based on men I have worked with and counselled through the years, and I share parts of their story to illustrate and unlock aspects of your story. The details and names are sufficiently changed so they cannot be recognised. To save you the frustration of thinking, 'who was that guy again?' I list here the characters and a little about them - feel free to flick back to this page if and when you need to remind yourself of whose story we are talking about.

NOTE: the names used in the examples are made up to conceal any trace of the identity of the actual people being referred to.

Fred

Age group	late 30's
Status	married with 3 children
Job	computer programmer
Reason for coming for help	his wife had caught him using porn
Habit started	pre-teen going to his Dad's work where the all-male staff had a collection of pornographic posters and books

Peter

Age group	late 20's
Status	Living with his partner and wanting to get married to her
Job	Owner of several businesses in several cities
Reason for coming for help	He wanted to get back to his Christian faith and morality before marrying his partner
Habit started	As a teenager

Alistair

Age group	50's
Status	Married with 2 adult children
Job	Chief executive
Reason for coming	Relationship problems - not really seeking help

for help	for his addiction

James

Age group	30’s
Status	Divorced
Job	Artist
Reason for coming for help	Wanting to break this addiction off his life
Habit started	Teenager

John

Age group	Early 30's
Status	Newly married, first baby on the way
Job	Bank executive
Reason for coming for help	Wife discovered porn use and completely devastated as she had no idea
Habit started	Teenager

Adam

Age group	Mid 20's
Status	Newly married, first baby on the way
Job	Designer
Reason for coming for help	Wife crushed by the discovery of his addiction

Habit started	Pre-teen age years

Tom

Age group	Late 20's
Status	Newly married
Job	Financial advisor
Reason for coming for help	The desire for personal freedom
Habit started	Teenage years

CHAPTER THREE: Why do I do it - What's in it for me? - Discovering the obvious and the unknown reasons I keep going there.

"I get really angry with myself because I

keep doing the things I don't want to"

Rom 8:19, 24, 25 (paraphrased)

Why do it – the major reasons

Before we expand on this let me tell you about Adam. Adam's mother had a serious illness when he a child and so was not able to nurture or comfort him. In his desperate need for comfort and nurture he went to porn in pre-adolescence years. His need was comfort, and as a child was 'returned to the breast' for that. It was not sexual for him at that stage - it was seeking what he desperately needed from a mother who couldn't give it.

It is actually the need the person was trying to meet when they first started using porn, not the one that they are currently recognising, that has the strongest hold on them. Until we find the need that was being met all those years ago, no real progress can be made in healing the addiction. Self-control, accountability arrangements and so on will have little effect if another way of meeting that original need has not been made available to a brain that has been trained in one alternative. Remember, the need is very often not sexual fulfilment or excitement.

Back to Adam's story. As far as Adam knew as a mature adult, his pornography addiction was about sexual excitement and so he was caught up in the cycle of trying to get free, almost by fighting the wrong battle.

This is important and will be discussed in more detail later. Suffice it to say that porn use is NOT all about sex. When the other reasons a man uses porn (other than sex) are not recognised, it is like leaving a door permanently open when a place is supposed to be secure.

So let's look at some of the major reasons we come across:

- *Comfort* - one of the most popular reasons for viewing porn. Similar to Adam’s case, those who experience loneliness often turn to pornography as a comfort. Porn can grant the instant gratification and provides a flood of dopamine to the brain. Dopamine is recognized by the brain as a reward. A connection between comfort and pornography is created. This connection causes many problems after that point, even well into adulthood. This false comfort is what he always comes back to, even if he has an intimate partner. It’s not about the sex, but that false sense of security created by the illusion. Because he’s hung up on the illusion, the young man doesn’t see that he’s able to achieve comfort and intimacy in reality, and this is when it becomes a real problem.

- *Stress release* - another common reason for viewing porn. This is more commonly an adult male's need than a teenagers'. Much like video games, pornography creates an imaginary world where you can melt your worries away. Just like you forget all about your work problems while you’re trying to conquer the next level of your favourite game, you ignore different stressors when you view porn. As stated previously, the dopamine release that floods one’s brain after viewing pornography can be viewed as a reward. Because of this, it can appear to be a stress reliever. It distracts you from your actual issues. It also stimulates your reward and pleasure centres, so you feel good about it in the process, even though guilt may ensue later. The guilt that often ensues, however, can override the stress release quite quickly, leading to an uncomfortable and life debilitating cycle. For many, this becomes an unhealthy stress management routine, which causes them even more stress. This routine quickly grows into an addiction. When porn turns into a safe haven they can’t live without, men start to access it at inappropriate times, including at the office. This sort of behaviour is not tolerated in a work environment so many get fired. Even then they don’t see it as a problem, which makes it all the more dangerous.

- *Sexual release* - sometimes even when the reasons that seem purely sexual, they are not strictly so. Pornography creates an ideal world where a man can live his fantasies. This makes releasing sexual pressure much easier, because it satisfies an emotional need, as well as a physical one. Furthermore, viewing porn is literally effortless. The ease of access often makes it a preferable

option, because you don’t have to work for it or make any compromises. It’s just what you want, when you want it. Many potential problems have their root here. Real life relationships are much more complex than clicking the play button, and sometimes inadequacy to dealing with actual problems may arise. Men may start to wonder why they should bother with their intimate partners at all, thus creating a self-destructive pattern which is realised too late, since pornography cannot be a substitute to real intimacy.

- *Unsatisfiable curiosity* - porn is much like the Rabbit Hole. It’s filled with unexplored possibilities and makes you want to keep moving forward until you find out where it goes. This effect is much more powerful during adolescence, but sometimes causes the mind to 'get stuck' with the curiosity. Hence, no matter how much is received, it’s never enough. The need to keep 'exploring' makes things escalate. Even into adulthood, the process continues. The man starts watching more 'erotic' and 'interesting' variations. The frequency also increases. Just like with any other addiction, there is a need to 'up the ante'. Sometimes 'normal' pornography loses its novelty and has to be replaced with something more 'spicy'. The man can’t escape this simply because he is fixated on an earlier period of his life.

- *Reward* - one of the reasons that’s often forgotten, yet is still valid when it comes to adolescents, is reward. To the adolescent mind, porn is a rewarding experience thanks to the fact that it literally stimulates the reward centres in the brain. The instant gratification caused by pornography is enough to make the teenager look for it again, and again. This is mostly what leaves them exposed to addiction, because repeating this pattern and receiving the reward are then transferred into adulthood. The self talk of the adult addict who may have a wife and children, and who is stuck in the reward trap, is "I deserve this" - it becomes a celebration of success.

- *Revenge* – This is when pornography can become especially harmful. In a heightened, stressful moment, you and your partner argue over something, or you are disappointed in some way. You become angry, possibly defensive, and you end up locking yourself away to look at porn, simply because you know you shouldn’t. Out of anger at your partner, however, you do what you know would be hurtful to her, even if it means she will never discover the behaviour. Using porn for revenge is often simply a way to hide behind the behaviour that feels better than facing the truth.

The reasons may be different, but the results are all the same. The development of an addiction has a high likelihood, and since it begins at a relatively early age, viewing porn is not seen as something wrong. Different rationalisations are created in order to justify the habit. This makes the addiction even stronger because none of it is seen as a problem until it starts having real world ramifications. When that happens, people are usually ready to seek help. However, until the problem - the real problem - is truly realised, and all justifications dropped, no real progress can ever be made. We'll discuss this more in the next chapter.

At the base of these other 'benefits' of using porn is a need that you are trying to meet. Your brain has been trained to bond the meeting of that need to using porn. As we discover the actual need porn is meeting we can start to actively explore alternatives that we can then offer the person (and the brain). In this way new neural bonds can be formed around how to meet that need in new and healthy ways.

Quick Tips In This Chapter:

- Porn is not just used for the purpose of getting some sexual excitement

- Porn is used for a variety of reasons, from revenge to reward mechanisms. It creates a dopamine rush which increases its likelihood of addictiveness.

- In discovering the 'other reasons' that have been bonded to the use of porn, we find the need it is meeting.

- Once the need is identified we can then offer other positive alternatives for the brain to consider, and to form new neural bonds to.

CHAPTER FOUR: The Justification Factor - Discovering why my subconscious is telling me it is OK when my conscience, my common sense, and my partner are telling me it isn't.

"If I say that what I am doing is OK,

I can successfully fool myself ..."

1 John 1:8 (paraphrased)

When I started working with guys trying to get free from porn, I spent a good portion of time discovering the beliefs they had arrived at around the use of pornography (more about this in the next chapter). However, once I got on to what I have called the 'justification factor' I started to see the lights come on more quickly. With this came the realisation of why their subconscious was supporting this habit, rather than rejecting it. This realisation also provided another powerful tool in paving the way to freedom.

Many of the men I deal with are going against their consciences, or they know that using porn is damaging their relationship. However, they justify this habit through 'sick'(or unhealthy) self-talk that is supported by deep core beliefs around it. When these beliefs justify their use of porn, then there is little support for change.

Let's talk a little about self talk. This is the internal dialogue that goes on within our minds ... constantly. Some of it we are aware of and some we are not. Our self-talk is the result of what we believe, and our feelings are the result of our self-talk. If we are a confident person, our self talk will reflect a strong belief in our worth, value and ability which will result in emotions of confidence.

Equally so the reverse is true for the person who lacks confidence.

So it is that our self talk can actually support a habit that we know is unhealthy for us. It's like the smoker who knows all the medical reasons persuading her to give up but who finally identified the self talk 'smoking gives me a reason to

relax and socialise at work".

I had been working with a client, let's call him 'Peter', for a few sessions. He was making good progress. We had uncovered some of the ways his beliefs and thinking were supporting his habit, and he was getting hope back that he could be the man he wanted to be. Then he slipped back again and I realised there was more to investigate and find out about his early introduction to porn. It was then that we worked together and discovered how the teenage Peter justified this habit.

> *Peter's porn addiction developed as a teenager – all his mates at school were doing porn so it was just the normal thing to do. As the son of a Christian Pastor he justified his use of porn with the rational that his school mates were all out there getting sex with their latest girlfriends, so at least porn was giving him the sexual thrill without actually 'being immoral'. He took on a strong belief (to justify the moral dilemma he faced)* ***that porn was a good alternative for him to immorality****. He also took on the belief that* ***as long as Mum didn't find out there would be no consequences****. When he came to me in his late 20's and living with a lovely girl he wanted to marry, that misbelief that '****hiding it made it OK'*** *was still alive and well.*

Alistair was a senior executive in an organisation that promoted family life and marriage. His own marriage was going through its struggles and one of the issues his wife had was his use of pornography.

> *In one of my sessions with Alistair he made the comment that when he used porn he didn't struggle so much in his thought life toward other female staff members (whom he sexualised). He knew this was quite unacceptable with the role he filled, and basically incompatible with the worldview that he held and promoted. The key to Alistair coming into personal freedom from his addiction was the surfacing and addressing of his* ***justification factor.*** *The self-talk and belief underneath his behaviour was that '****this habit helps to keep me thinking in a more pure manner towards the real females around me'****. This justification factor was the primary shackle on Alistair's life.*

These two examples of the justification factor show that porn habits can happen early in life and become self-encouraged. They are also prime examples of how we will justify something in our lives that we know isn't good for us or our relationships.

In the book *Power of Habit*, by Charles Duhigg, DuHigg discusses the difference between the habits we can change and those we cannot. He presents a plan stating that any habit can be changed, if only the routine behaviour is changed.

I suggest that if you are justifying your habit, be it:

- cognitively through your self talk, or

- sub-consciously through the beliefs you have developed around the habit (see the next chapter), or

- a combination of both self talk and beliefs (which in reality is what is happening)

… then you will never be able to change the habit. Why? Because your brain is telling you it is OK to do it and acts as an 'over-ride' to attempts at behavioural change.

Quick Tips In This Chapter:

- If you continue to justify your behaviour with self-talk, you are unlikely to experience long term change.

- Work diligently to identify why you started using, even if you have to think back to the first time you were drawn to pornography, and how you convinced yourself it was OK.

- The 'justification factor' has to be identified so it can be disputed and brought into reality.

- The 'justification factor' is the excuse for the addiction continuing.

CHAPTER FIVE: Early Introduction Beliefs That Hold Me Captive; Misbeliefs That Support the Addiction

"As a person thinks in their their subconscious...

so they behave"

Prov 23:7 (paraphrased)

The first thing to realise on this journey out of addiction is that your addiction or habit is not primarily because of your testosterone levels, your environment, or your lack of will-power. Logic doesn't support this practice of using pornography, nor does science or known consequences. It is actually the wiring of your brain that supports, justifies and excuses the practice. Until your brain wiring is understood you are pretty much powerless to achieve sustainable change. So let's take some time to look at how misbeliefs are established that support the development of an addiction to porn.

Most of the men I deal with have this in common with each other - their first introduction to porn was at quite a young age – some even before the age of 10. When trying to help men get free of porn it is important to go back to that first introduction, because it is there that several things are established.

Beliefs around the use of pornography are formed at this point.

Beliefs that under-gird the use of porn are sub-conscious conclusions which were usually reached during the first introduction. They are **beliefs about** the use of pornography, whereas the 'justification factor' are **excuses for** the use of pornography.

It is usually this belief, established in childhood, which is still strongly underlying the use of porn as an adult.

> *Fred was a computer programmer and spent virtually all his working day at his computer with internet access. He was introduced to porn before the age of 10 because his father owned a garage and pornographic*

photos were the norm in the lunch room and toilet. As a boy he was exposed to these images and concluded (or became loyal to the belief) that ***porn was normal****. It was open and accepted and Mum (or Dad) never said anything to the contrary. So, it was easy for Fred to see nothing wrong with porn – it was normal. The childhood belief became the subconscious master of the adult. As an adult he knew cognitively it was not what he wanted to be doing as a Christian husband and father, but the subconscious belief over-rode the cognitive.*

Now lets hear from another of our 'characters', Charlie, and the early belief that he came to.

Charlie came to me as a married man with a young family. His wife had had enough of his porn habit and wanted him fixed. Charlie was another man with the strong misbelief that ***if I don't get caught there will be no consequences****. Charlie genuinely believed that there were no consequences to his use of porn because he experienced no consequences as a youth. If I can get away with it, then no one is affected.*

These misbeliefs are extremely powerful and until they are detected they cannot be disputed and displaced with a superior belief or insight. The oldest beliefs are the strongest. And so it is that you may have a cognitive awareness of how unhealthy pornography is, but if your subconscious has already made its mind up that it is OK (because of a long held misbelief), then nothing changes. We will devote a later chapter to the approach that will *detect, dispute and displace* those treacherous beliefs that are destroying our lives and relationships.

Until we find the misbeliefs underlying the use of porn, our only resource to try to stop it, is just that … "stop it". In other words we are looking toward will-power, resistance techniques, accountability relationships, and other similar methods as our only source to overcome. This is what we call behaviourism; behavioural techniques that rely totally on will-power. Behaviourism has a shelf life and is usually fine, when everything else is fine. But, when the enemy of most addicts (H.A.L.T.S) hits, its back down the slippery slope to the comforter of choice. (H.A.L.T.S. stands for Hungry, Angry, Lonely, Tired, Stressed or Sick).

Before going on to look at why will-power alone can never really master an addiction, let's look at some of the main misbeliefs around the use of porn.

- "Porn is normal" – the first public film exhibition took place in 1896, and one of the first erotic films was shot the same year. As soon as the camera was advanced enough to capture moving pictures, we started shooting porn. Considering that sexually-oriented depictions have been found in caves dating back thousands of years, this is hardly surprising. Many would say it's normal and even healthy. However, today's porn is much more easily accessible and readily available, which is the reason it's getting problematic. In a sense, it always has been, but now we begin to see the consequences. Cocaine was very popular for the first fifty years of its popular use, and was thought that it had medical properties and no side effects. However, nowadays we're all too familiar with the truth. It's the same with porn. It may feel natural, but there are consequences and addiction problems waiting for you at the end of that tunnel. Just because it is common doesn't make it normal or healthy.

Recently a woman who was distressed about her partner's use of porn, and wanted him to get some help to break the addiction, talked with my wife. She shared how her partner's response was that: in the country he comes from (he was of a different nationality to her) "everyone does porn".

- "If I don't get caught, there will be no consequences" – the first problem with that misconception is that it's conditional. Even in the beginning of that sentence, you are excusing yourself in a conditional manner. This is usually a bad sign. If there is a condition in order for your rationalisation to work, then it's not a good rationalisation at all. Furthermore, this is a completely false belief. Developing an addiction as a consequence of an unhealthy habit renders this argument moot. Whether you get caught or not, there are consequences.

- "Pornography is not addictive" – this one if my absolute favourites. They said the same thing about cocaine a hundred years ago, but now we know that this is not the case. Today many people believe that it's only possible to develop an addiction to substances. This is interesting, because even in those cases the psychological component that drives people to the addiction is much harder to deal with than the addiction itself. Realising your problems and deciding to solve them, as well as having the will to follow through, is hard

enough. However, with purely psychological addictions, this is even harder because the problem is realized much later. Not only is pornography addictive, but this addiction is very difficult to overcome.

- "Pornography is merely about sex" – I've explained why that's not the case in the previous chapter. To recap, just like with other addictions, there are usually underlying causes and secondary benefits.

All of these misconceptions are easy to believe because they excuse us. However, just because they're convenient doesn't make them true.

If you recognize that your behaviour is damaging to your life in some way (for example, destroying an important relationship), but you continue the behaviour, *it is an addiction.* When your brain's reward system becomes altered (such as with the rush of dopamine), addiction is a possibility.

Just because porn may work for some without any visible consequences, does not mean that your addiction isn't real. Remember, some people are able to shop on a regular basis, and others are shopaholics. An addiction is also something that you do, at least in part, against your own will. At some point, you want to stop, you just haven't found the correct resources. If you have a behaviour that you cannot stop, but it goes against your belief system, you should get honest with yourself and seek help.

And now to help you on your journey to freedom, take some time to reflect on your introduction to porn and the childhood/adolescent conclusions you came to at that time (these are the conclusions that your subconscious has decided are right and normal).

- What do you anticipate when you reach toward viewing porn?

- What is your self-talk?

- What would it feel like to go without?

- What beliefs did you arrive at when you first discovered porn and then continued to indulge in the habit?

- What justification talk are you using to excuse yourself for a habit you

wouldn't openly share with others?

Quick Tips In This Chapter:

- Having an addiction is not reflective of your willpower or lack thereof.

- Most addicts discovered pornography at an early age, and caused their brains to develop a belief that supports the behaviour.

- We can’t just “stop it,” because we likely haven’t had the proper information available to us to support our success in 'just stopping'.

- Until we discover the beliefs that support the habit, we can't apply the tools to challenge and change that belief, which will then lead to behavioural change.

Pornography becomes an addiction when it begins taking over areas of your life. For example, if it causes you to compromise your moral values, causes issues with your libido, or causes issues with important people in your life, then it’s time to acknowledge the addiction so that you can break free.

CHAPTER SIX: Let's Talk Consequences - Training the brain to think 'consequences first' is key to getting free

When it comes to consequences, the adolescent male mind has some wires that aren't connecting. Literally. It was previously believed that brain development stopped at around the age of ten. Thus it was thought that teenagers had fully developed brains but lacked experience, which is what accounted for their lack of foresight and disregard for consequences. However, in the past few years we've discovered that this was not the case. In fact, the brain is not fully developed until a person's mid-twenties. Before that neural connections are fewer and don't work as fast. This is especially the case in the region of the frontal lobe, and, more specifically, the prefrontal cortex.

The prefrontal cortex is deeply involved in decision making, personality expression, complex cognitive processes, and moderating behaviour. It was found that this area of the brain is underdeveloped in teenagers. The neurons (brain cells) that comprise it are not well myelinated. Think of myelin as the neuron's insulation – the better insulated they are, the faster the signals go. Hence the part of the brain that moderates behaviour and allows the adult to think about consequences is not fully developed in adolescents. The region of the brain that's supposed to make you ask yourself about the consequences doesn't work that well when you're a teenager. This is why teenagers are prone to self-destructive, irresponsible behaviour, with no regards for the outcome. When behavioural patterns emerge during this stage of development, they sometimes persist into adulthood. Thus, even then the habit is not questioned. And these patterns do emerge because teenagers are much more sensitive to reward than adults are, as a study in the University of Iowa has found (SAGE Journals, 2014). Because teenagers derive a reward from watching porn, they completely ignore possible negative effects. Once that becomes a habit, it's really hard to change, even for an adult.

The mind has to be trained to think "consequences before thrill", "consequences before short-term comfort", "consequences before the immediate need this is meeting".

Retraining the mind, and even the sub-conscious, is possible but it does take hard work. We know this by the relatively common example of people who have moved countries (as tourists or permanently) and found themselves having to drive on the opposite side of the road from what is natural for them. In this situation one rapidly re-trains their mind (and subconscious) when re-teaching themselves to drive on the opposite side of the road. Why can they retrain themselves so quickly in this situation? They do this because they are fully persuaded of the consequences of not changing, slipping up, forgetting, or going for the natural, comfortable and learned patterns. Thus, being 'fully persuaded' is essential for the addict who wants to change. After a relatively short period of time, the new behaviour (as with driving on the opposite side of the road) becomes natural and one's automatic default.

CONSEQUENCES

So, what are some of the consequences that every man must be aware of when it comes to pornography?

For him

Unrealistic sexual expectations

Disappointment and boredom with future or current actual sexual partner

'Cheating' on partner becomes easier as the brain has been trained to think 'I'm bored so I can move on'

Lowering of Libido - there is now research to back this up

Inability to be aroused by actual sexual partner

Sense of shame - loss of self-respect

Loss of the respect of children, parents, significant others

Loss of employment

For the significant 'her' in his life

Feeling compared / violated / inadequate / unclean

Loss of self esteem

Serious body issues

Loss of trust

Insecurity

Lost - not knowing how to be

Regret for having been 'ripped off'

Trapped

Never being sure 'where his head is at' during love making

For the relationship with their partner

Loss of trust in a number of areas

Partner always on red alert, wondering

Loss of emotional connection and intimacy

Partner having to (or not) fill roles that don't belong within an intimate relationship - like police-woman, priest (confessor), watch dog, accountability partner, confidant of dark and dirty secrets,

For fathering

Shame around trying to guide sons

Shame around parenting daughters (knowing they are preying on other men's daughters)

Creating a path it will be hard to stop their sons following in

Loss of respect when discovered and exposed

Teaching self-justification and defensiveness to their children (if and when found out, and trying to excuse themselves)

Teaching blame-shifting to their children as they turn the reason for

their habit on others (often their wife / partner).

In order to overcome instant gratification, you need to think about the consequences of your actions (now that you know what they are), and the way your habit is affecting the people around you. It's a difficult process because instant gratification 'screams' in your head. It makes your mind want it, and want it now. You need to resist the initial urge and just spend a second to think about it. How would your parents feel if they could see you right now? What about your significant other? What about your children? Are you really going to disappoint them so much just so you can get a quick fix? You need to ask these questions. You need to know how much this is affecting you. Every time you don't want to have sex with your girlfriend or wife, she feels unwanted and insecure. Every time you're actually having sex, she wonders whom you're thinking about. This affects her deeply. Your relationship with your children suffers, as well. Would they respect you if they knew what you were doing? These are all questions you need to ask yourself before you hit the play button. Once you realize where this is taking you, it will be much easier to stop doing it. Just look at yourself from another perspective. Imagine your son's reaction as he enters the room and sees you. Imagine how your daughter will view her father if she found out what he was doing. Imagine how you will make your wife feel. Even if you're not married and don't have children, just take a second to imagine what your girlfriend would think.

Of course, in these moments of realisation, it's also pretty easy to shift the blame. It's not your fault you're viewing porn. Just like Peter when his addiction started, you gave into peer pressure. Or maybe, like Peter, your father didn't teach you any better. Or, like Adam, you were looking for nurture. The justifications can go on and on. Your wife or girlfriend isn't always available, or you're stressed at work and need a relief. The truth is that all of these rationalisations are simply there to hide the truth – you have a bad habit and you don't want to come to terms with it. Sadly, you can't fix it unless you do, so you need to stop making excuses for yourself and start thinking about the consequences and taking responsibility. You are responsible for your own decisions and you're in control of your life. Once you realise that, it all becomes much easier to deal with.

I want you to know that your past does not determine your future and that habits of the past can become empowerments of your and other's futures.

Studies have repeatedly shown that our brains cannot tell the difference between when we actually see something or imagine it. In other words, if you imagine the consequences of your actions before they happen, your brain reacts in a similar manner as it would if it actually happened. As you begin to work with your therapist or accountability partner to develop a freedom plan, you should include the visualization of consequences.

Instead of just allowing them to cross your mind, actually pause for a moment and visualize the conversation with your loved one as she learns you have hidden something. Continue this visualization, and your brain will actually rewire to weigh the consequences before you use pornography. It’s important to note that, once again, your addiction is not a reflection of your willpower, and these visualizations should provide a healthy realization for you. You should not allow yourself to become discouraged or allow guilt to prevent your progress, if (or more likely, when) you experience a backslide.

More than one man has shared with me that the mental image of the hurt on their wife's face is now enough to keep them from using porn again. They visualize this actual image and never ever want to inflict such pain again.

As one last comment on this topic of consequences, sometimes it is necessary to expand the 'vista' of the consequences one is bringing to bear upon their habit.

> I had been working with this man for some time in his fight against his porn addiction and we were making fairly good progress. He was coming to grips with the idea of using the visualisation of consequences to help him see where this addiction was taking him. Most of the time he was doing well but every so often he slipped up, and once he did he pretty much indulged his habit for a week or two.
>
> In one session I found out a little more about his children and suggested what family life might look like should any of them catch him at his computer indulging his addiction. We talked this through a bit and then I suggested that come his daughter's wedding day, she may not want him walking her down the aisle if she knew about this side of his life. Eureka, we finally had a consequence that got the traction to energise his fight to freedom.
>
> Sometimes expanding the vista of the possible consequences well into the

future is needed to energise the changes sought.

Quick Tips In This Chapter:

- Understanding consequence is an important part of the addiction battle. If we use self-talk to justify our behaviour, we miss out on understanding the important consequences that keep us from repeating toxic behaviour.

- As we learn consequences, they help us develop habits. For example, we will quickly develop a habit of going a new speed limit if the laws change (well at least we hope we will).

- Consequences are not only felt by the one with the toxic behaviour. In regards to pornography, consequences are likely to be seen in all areas of the relationship from trust to intimacy. Your partner may also experience self-esteem issues, as well as issues with intimacy, as they feel a sense of betrayal or insecurity.

- Visualizing the consequences of your actions before doing them can greatly improve the chances that you will make good decisions. Over time, it can also create a habit in your brain; causing your brain to think about the consequences before you take action.

- Using the visualization technique for consequences, combined with using behaviour substitution, can help you rewire your brain to create better habits.

Tip: If you visualize the situation during times you are not tempted, you could strengthen this neural connection. You can also use these times without temptation to develop strong plans for the moments you are tempted. Some, however, notice that thinking about their habit during 'normal' times can cause setbacks. Find out if this tip works for you by first visualizing an entire situation of consequences while in the car, or another area where porn isn’t accessible. Take note of your emotions and reactions during this exercise. Once you feel comfortable, begin to think of positive behaviours you can swap for pornography, and think of 'exit plans' ahead of time, for when you find yourself tempted.

CHAPTER SEVEN: Mental fusions – what they are and how they work against me...and can work for me

"Neurons that fire together wire together"

Hebbs theory

"Once we've made a connection in our brain

it's like that connection overcomes logic"

Titus 1:15 (paraphrased)

I prefer to render this principle '**neurons that fire together, fuse together**'. This carries the idea of an extremely strong and almost permanent bonding together of two things that don't necessarily belong.

This concept encapsulates the process that takes place throughout one's life but most significantly in early childhood and during the first introduction to something. I'm talking, of course, about neuroplasticity. I've already explained the basis of this earlier, as you probably remember. Neuroplasticity is responsible for your brain's infrastructure constantly changing and evolving. The statement above means that when connections between neurons are used again and again, they strengthen or fuse together. It's like walking in a field – the more you walk the same paths, the easier they become to use, thus making them even stronger. If other people decide to walk through the same field, they will probably use the paths you've already created. This is how additional neurons can join established connections and reinforce them. Once these connections are created, they're difficult to break. However, with enough time and determination, this is possible.

Neuroplasticity is the ability of our brain to change. Over the course of our lives, our neural pathways change based on the habits we create and the environment around us. Our emotions, thought processes and even the mapping of our brain are all part of neuroplasticity. When we begin new processes, our brain begins to map them after they are repeated. This is because neuroplasticity is part of our

brain’s 'efficiency system', as it seeks to make connections to help us become more efficient.

In Duhigg’s *Power of Habit*, he discusses a man who had lost the ability to form memories, but he could still find his way home after walking around the neighbourhood, and he could still retrieve food from his kitchen when he got hungry. Researchers determined that he had created habits or neural pathways for these behaviours. In short, when the man experienced a trigger, such as being hungry, his brain went into efficiency mode and led him to the kitchen. Even though he didn’t recall the event after the fact, his brain was making sure his behaviours were safe and efficient.

The story in Duhigg’s book should be a strong indicator of how powerful our habits can be. The fact that we can change them provides us with an immense amount of power over our own lives and brains.

With this context, let’s have a look at some examples of mental fusions supporting the habit of pornography use.

> *Peter fused his use of porn to being '**a safe alternative to sleeping around**'. As the son of a Christian minister he didn't want to join his mates in immorality, so justified his use of porn with this mental fusion.*
>
> *Adam, whose mother had serious illness when he was quite young was desperate for motherly nurture and comfort. As quite a young boy he discovered porn and in the pre-adolescent stage developed the habit of regularly going to pornographic images of naked breasts for comfort. For him, at this young age, it was not sexual, it was about comfort. And so his brain **fused porn to comfort**. Adam and his wife came to us early in their marriage after she had discovered his addiction and been quite wounded by it. It was no comfort whatsoever to her that his addiction was nothing to do with any lack in her. As a grown man why did he now go to porn ... for comfort? The brain supported the habit.*
>
> *Alistair justified his use of porn because by using it, along with masturbation, he found he could keep his thought life far more respectful toward female staff members he worked with. Once he'd 'done his thing*

*with porn' he didn't find himself undressing female staff members with his eyes. Alistair had **fused porn to self-control**. This sounds so bizarre, but once again, the brain supported the habit.*

*Peter and Fred had both **fused porn to relaxation and de-stress**.*

... and so the list can go on.

The problem with mental fusions is that they can fuse two things together that don't logically and practically belong. It feels 'right' because that is the way the brain has been trained. The challenge now, in recognising the fusion, is to break it by separating the two items and training the brain to make new fusions. For the brain that has fused the use of porn to relaxation, it needs to be trained with repeated insights that porn brings more trouble than you ever wanted. Porn will bring stress and disappointment, not relaxation. And so on.

Moving on from **detecting** the mental fusion, we must then **dispute** it with truthful reality and reassurance, and then **displace** that fusion with healthy ones.

Here are a couple of examples of new fusions around relaxation. “Relaxation comes from being at peace with myself and those I love.” “True relaxation is the comfort I feel in being in control of my life and my destiny.”

Why did we spend so long discussing consequences in previous chapters? Because, until the brain starts to form new mental fusions with the consequences that result from this addiction, it will default to those established in teenage years (or first introduction to porn). When one is forced to drive on the opposite side of the road from what they have been trained to do, they instantly start forming new mental fusions to keep them safe. They fuse driving on the left (or right) side of the road as 'safe', 'correct' etc. Why? Because their life depends on it. Only when the addict realises that his life (his marriage, self-respect etc.) depends on him changing, will he actively reject the previous mental fusions around the use of porn and coach his brain into new fusions.

By the way, did you notice that the fusions of these men also run very close to the 'justification' argument they use to quiet their consciences?

Quick Tips In This Chapter:

- Our brain has 'neuroplasticity' that allows us to create new neural connections.

- Our habits are merely neural connections, made up of a trigger, behaviour, and reward that have been firing together consistently.

- We likely have old thought patterns based on connections that were made long ago. This is often the source of bad habits and addictions.

- Our brain uses habits to make us feel 'safe', as it becomes more efficient. When we first change habits, we must acknowledge the unhealthy connections, or fusions, that we have previously created. Once we acknowledge the bad connections, we can decide what and how to change.

CHAPTER EIGHT: Triggers and the Slippery Slope

Every addict has specific **triggers** which need to be clearly identified as this is the top of the slippery slope into re-use. The brain needs to offer an alternative to the familiar, or the efforts to change and the strength of will-power will be unsupported.

> *Fred, our computer programmer, was a 'happily' married man with 3 young children. He had graduated from Bible College and was active in his local church. However he had a porn habit of many, many years duration, and his wife had finally caught him out. She was devastated and insistent of him seeking help. As Fred opened up to me we looked at the triggers he needed to become more aware of. For him, one of the major ones was **the need to relax his mind** during his working day; the need for distraction.*
>
> *In his lunch time Fred would stay at his computer and look through the on-line version of a major national newspaper. However, this is not where his mouse clicking finger stayed, as he would soon be clicking on links that eventually took him to porn. What started with a swim suit add would end in an orgy.*
>
> *Recognising this trigger raised Fred's awareness of when he was most vulnerable, but also opened up the opportunity to find an alternative mind relaxing activity. So for Fred, walking down the road and buying the actual newspaper to read was part of the 'solution package' we put together.*
>
> *Peter's main trigger was also the need to **relax his mind**. Yes he enjoyed the sexual thrill of porn, but that wasn't usually the first reason he went there. As a man running several retail outlets and an internet trading site, Peter's whole day was one of texts, emails, decision-making, and discussions. He recognised only two activities when his mind totally switched off – one was playing a particular team sport, and the other was watching porn. No prizes for working out which of those two is easiest to*

access.

For many men the triggers are:

Alone late at night with computer access

Feeling stressed and deserving of stress relief

Feeling aroused

Feeling bored

Feeling the need of a reward

A fight with their partner

One of the realisations the addict has to become convinced of is '**I am not trustworthy in those vulnerable places.**' '**I cannot trust myself to keep myself clean.**'

Peter, who we met earlier, was a fervent Christian and became a Christian youth worker. However, frustrations with his double life led him to both resign from being a youth worker and walk away from his faith. So addicted was he, that the life he cognitively knew was wrong for him, became who he was.

Peter came to me seeking help to get free of porn. He was living with a lovely girl who he wanted to marry. After getting honest with himself, he got honest with his girlfriend about his porn addiction.

We were making good progress with our sessions and he took on board my advice to put a soft ware package on his home computer that notified his girlfriend when he went on a porn site. This was a great deterrent. However, when I suggested this also needed to be on his work computers he resisted, saying that his staff would think he was being a bit over the top.

Well, you can probably guess what happened. Working late at the office, Peter would find himself visiting the all-too-familiar porn sites. And of

course, as with many men trying to get free, once he was on the sites he just kept going. "I'm going to confess this to my girlfriend, so I might as well see as much as I can while I'm being naughty" was his rational.

Peter had to come to the realisation that **he couldn't trust himself in any scenario where he had habitually fallen prey to his addiction before**. He learnt the hard way.

Knowing one's triggers is essential in the first line of defence (practically speaking) against falling.

Taking the illustration of the slippery slope further the addict needs to understand that the top of the slippery slope is always connected to the bottom. This is key when linking triggers to consequences. Just as one's triggers are at the top of the slippery slope, the consequences of this addiction lie at the bottom like a septic, toxic lake in which our relationships, self-respect and even our dreams can be eaten away and consumed. As the triggers start to engage the brain is anticipating a huge rush of dopamine and has no real thought of the resulting consequences. And so it is that the brain needs to be trained to think 'consequences', not thrill.

For the porn addict, at the bottom of the slippery slope are a number of possibilities including

- loss of self-respect

James had been struggling with a porn addiction for years. He had lost one marriage already where he found himself unable to be sexually attracted to his wife. She didn't sign up to a marriage that made her feel inadequate and compared, and where there was virtually no love making. She eventually opted out. James was working on himself and seeking to break this addiction. One day the stereotype of 'a dirty old man' walked into his place of business, and the thought of becoming that person so disgusted him that he became fully persuaded "that is not who I want to be". He now had one key insight, fuelled with a passionate desire, on which to hang all the other insights he had been given.

- loss of the respect of my family / children / friends

John had a secret addiction to porn that his wife of about 3 years knew nothing of. Devastated at finding him out, his wife requested him to admit this habit to her parents as part of her initial requirement for re-building trust. Put yourself in John's shoes and ask what that would have felt like and how small he must have felt.

- loss of job

More than one senior educator has lost their job (and the respect of their community) as their addiction to pornography has been found out, and their resignation required.

- more isolation than I have ever imagined

Since his porn addiction had been discovered, John has found himself disconnected from his wife emotionally and physically. Yes, they may still sleep in the same bed, but the sense of isolation that has come upon him is crushing him. He did porn to 'feel' connected to people who, in his mind, 'loved and desired him'. Now the one who did love and desire him is struggling to live with this person who has hurt her so much.

- supervised access with my children

This may sound a little extreme as a consequence. However, left unchecked, a pornography addiction can take a man into such depravity that his ex-wife (and the courts) may determine this is the only safe way for him to see his own children. I can hear the scoffing of men as I write this ... but be warned. Just because this doesn't make the evening news doesn't mean it isn't happening.

- loss of real intimacy (sacrificed for fantasy intimacy)

Love making is about an overall experience of intimate connection; emotional and physical. It is not 'just a physical act'. Porn is a fantasy world of physical pleasure that will rob a man of real intimacy with his life partner. The intimacy of being truly loved, treasured, cared for, understood, comforted and accepted for who you are. This can never come from a computer screen or a magazine. And it will be taken from you by the one who does / did

love you before they found out about your hurtful habit.

- Loss of excitement toward real intimacy.

*Tom shared with me that, even after several months of 'good' sex with his new wife, the thought of pursuing porn was **more** exciting. As we explored this together, we discovered the 'molecule' affect that was mentioned earlier in the book. As a teenager, using porn had not only been sexually exciting but there was the added excitement of 'doing something my parents wouldn't agree with', 'getting away with it', 'carrying out a personal dare' and so on. These added excitement factors put the excitement of anticipating doing porn again higher up the thermometer than anticipating sex with his wife.*

- Loss of marriage, and the financial impact of that.

Paying for some good counselling and coaching to overcome this habit will be way cheaper than a divorce - and significantly less people will get hurt!

- Wife feeling compared, inadequate, dirty, sexually violated, unattractive.

- Loss of libido. As you probably remember, about 60% of the participants in the University of Cambridge study reported having lowered libido and erectile dysfunction. Their libido was completely shifted toward their fantasy world. The documented evidence of this in increasing with erectile dysfunction now being recognised as one of the drivers for men seeking to give up their prolonged use of porn. This is a real outcome of prolonged use of pornography.

- Not being aroused by or sexually attracted to ones wife or partner.

This is the story of too many of my male clients. Oh yes, they can still make it all work properly (most of the time), but arousal problems are common because the fantasy world of porn sets up unrealistic images and expectations.

- Normal sex becomes boring; normal sex actually requires some effort. There is a healthy level of foreplay involved, changing poses, trying out

new things, making sure that the sexual partner is satisfied, and a lot more. Compare that to the inherent simplicity of watching porn. The gratification is instant, you don't have to do anything about it, and you can live all your fantasies whenever you want. Normal sex thus becomes boring, because the man is locked in his make-believe world. There, he gets whatever he wants, however he wants it, and there is no one to judge him. He doesn't have to think about satisfying anyone other than himself. The problem with this is that its not real. It's an illusion. This causes problems in the relationship, brings up feelings of guilt, and more.

- An unsatisfiable sexual appetite that keeps seeking something new and usually more perverse

> *Peter admitted to me that his appetite for porn had changed through the years, as 'simple' porn became boring and he slowly 'graduated' to increasingly perverse sexual activities. With this visual barrage feeding into and becoming resident in his brain, his expectation of what his partner would participate in became more and more unrealistic and degrading.*

No doubt you are recognising this list as virtually the same as the consequences listed previously. That's because it is. These are the consequences that the addict's brain has to learn to focus on when the pressure to indulge comes on.

At the top of the slippery slope are the triggers. This is why they must be recognised, prepared for, and remedied, because there is no stopping once you are over the edge.

> *Remember Peter alone at his work place late in the evening with no internet protection on the computer. He is already standing on the precipice of the slippery slope just by his physical situation. Add to that the fact that the day had been stressful, and he felt like rewarding himself with some 'relaxation', and he was a goner.*

Try to dig deeply to find the reason you began using porn. Now, try to acknowledge what 'triggers' it today. For example, you likely find yourself more vulnerable to any bad habits after a stressful day. If this is the case, you can work

with an accountability partner, coach, mentor or therapist to establish a healthier response to those triggers that still leave you feeling rewarded.

Quick Tips in This Chapter:

- Triggers are the things that spark a desire for us to use pornography. It differs among individuals, but some feel the need after a stressful day at work or an argument with a partner.

- Some experience a trigger when exposed to the possibility. Since a natural boundary (covered in chapter 10) does not exist between us and the unlimited internet, sometimes we must create our own boundaries by using software protection, etc. If being alone with unlimited access is a trigger for you, read more in this chapter for options to help you conquer the trigger.

- It is true that some who are addicted feel they can't trust themselves with unlimited computer access. Though it is hard to face, it is better than the consequences, and you can designate an accountability partner to help track your usage with specific software programs.

- The consequences of using porn are real and can be devastating. The consequences of a porn addiction, however, are greater. Families can become destroyed, employment can become more difficult, and trust can vanish. The sooner you recognize the consequences, the sooner you can make a real decision that freedom is the right path for you. When you recognize the consequences, make sure you visualize them before they happen, so you can develop an action plan to prevent them in healthy ways.

- The consequences are the bottom of the slippery slope.

CHAPTER NINE: Willpower Is Needed But Is Not Enough In Itself

What role does will-power have in one's fight over addiction? I believe it is primarily in:

1. Recognising the triggers and reaching for the alternatives

2. Rehearsing the disputing truths needed to displace the misbeliefs until the subconscious is re-trained

3. Refocusing the brain from thrill to consequences

However, will-power is not enough in itself. When used as the only tool in the toolkit it inevitably leaves many men feeling defeated and hopeless.

So what is it that makes will-power falter?

Firstly will-power falters because of our 5 enemies listed in the acronym HALTS - **H**ungry, **A**ngry, **L**onely, **T**ired or **S**tressed or Sick. These are generally the major hurdles to will-power. Why? Because they weaken resolve and direct one to look for comfort, relief or distraction. They also open the addict up to the dangerous mind-set of '**I deserve this'**.

The second reason will-power fails is that it has nothing other than the desire to change to empower or support it. Desire is a great starting point. In fact the strength of desire will normally determine the effectiveness of therapy and life coaching. One of the big questions every addict needs to ask themselves is: ***"how fully persuaded am I that my life will be better off without this thing?"***.

The third reason will-power alone is usually insufficient to triumph over this addiction is that it doesn't in itself provide skills or alternatives for the brain to reach for, instead of that all-too-familiar mouse or magazine.

Desire to change is crucial but is not enough in itself.

What is needed to empower my willpower?

To your desire must be added insight and tools; insights that help when will-power isn't enough, and tools that can be used to help us fight the addiction. Consider the following 'tools' or tips.

- Dispute the early beliefs. Remember, your brain likely made those old connections when you were very young, and those connections weren't meant to continue into the adult world. Use your will power to dispute these early beliefs and displace them with superior, mature ones.

- Cognitive Behavioural Therapy is an approach that suggests our thoughts lead to our emotions, and our emotions lead to our actions. This supports what Duhigg and many others have implied about habits, which is that our brains have been 'taught' to respond a particular way in search of a reward, or an emotional high. For example, when we become stressed, we think we need the dopamine rush that is often the 'reward' of pornography. Use your will-power to accumulate other alternatives that are readily available to release a flow of dopamine.

- Realizing and visualising the consequences helps our brains rewire, and to consider long-term consequence ahead of time. This is another exercise you can harness your will-power to do.

- As stated previously: 'neurons that fire together, wire together'. In other words, once our brain has made associations with a particular pattern so many times, it will continue to associate the actions together as an effort to be efficient. The good news is that neuroplasticity allows us to rewire these connections by causing new actions to fire together. This creates new habits. Our desire to change can be harnessed to memorize and rehearse the consequences of where this habit is taking us.

- Rehearsing consequences in stable environments (away from temptations) can help our brains create new associations with pornography and its consequences. Visualize the consequences before taking action, as science shows little difference in our brain activity among imagining and actually seeing. This allows you to shortcut the system by using visualizations to

achieve the connections more quickly.

- Allow yourself to see the pain of where you are headed if you do not stop. Instead of tuning out possibilities, embrace them and use them as motivation to create new, healthier habits.

- Separate the perceived benefits you have fused with pornography. Again, remember that the benefits were likely associated at a time in your much younger years, and it is time to create new, healthier associations that reflect consequences.

- Alter the self-talk. *Never* use self-talk as a justification. Use it to encourage yourself about the freedom you can obtain from your addiction.

- Displace the early, faulty beliefs and self-talk

The 'will-power brigade' will inevitably try and present 'just stop it', 'grow up and act more responsibly', 'try harder' or other cliché answers. And this is when will-power falters and discouragement sets in. Rather, see your will-power as an essential part of the process of change, but understand the empowerment to change comes from changing the neural bonds that exist.

When desire and will-power fall short, the following tools can be helpful in preventing relapse, or keeping addiction at bay:

- internet protection software.

- an accountability partner with whom you will be 1) really honest and 2) OK to reach out to in the midst of temptation.

- alternative activities that will supply a big part of what the porn addict gets from their indulgence. This is specifically where the ‘routine behaviour’ replacement we have mentioned previously comes into play. Your alternative activities should be things you can do when you experience a trigger that would typically lead to porn usage.

In the fight against pornography addiction I can assure you ignorance is not bliss.

Alistair is a senior executive and motivational speaker. He had a long standing porn addiction which he still indulged regularly. His wife sits

there listening to him address audiences as a motivational speaker and thinks to herself "what a hypocrite". In my first session with Alistair I mentioned one of the internet protection software packages that are available. This package sends an email notification to a designated person every time the user goes to a suspicious site. To my surprise this man, who leads an organization that sees itself supporting traditional family values, did not even know such software packages existed. Ignorance is not bliss, I can assure you.

Use will power at the top of the slippery slope

The slippery slope is a concept that is important for any addict to understand. The best illustration to strengthen this concept is that of mountain climbers who carry ice picks to 'self-arrest' in the case of losing their footing. They have but a very brief instant of time in which to thrust that ice pick into the glacier or rock face, so as to arrest their fall before the momentum gets too great. Once the momentum has built up to a certain level the ice pick is useless.

Remember, the 'fall' into indulging this addiction is like falling down a slippery slope with no way to stop the descent.

The further over the slippery slope we go, the harder it is for will-power to get any traction. It is the same with addicts. They must self-arrest at the top of the slippery slope or else the momentum will be too great. They will indulge their habit once again and then feel the regret and hopelessness that follows.

Left to your own inadequate resources this pull will become stronger and stronger (like the slippery slope getting steeper), to the point that you can't stop the fall. This is why it is important to know your triggers; those situations, feelings or other aspects that you know will end up in you 'going there'.

Quick Tips in This Chapter:

- Though you need will-power to combat an addiction, it is not enough on its own. Your addiction does not mean that you don't have enough will-power. You simply have to combine will-power with other tools in order to achieve your goals.

- Will-power falters because of our five enemies listed in the anachronism HALTS - **H**ungry, **A**ngry, **L**onely, **T**ired or **S**tressed/**S**ick. When these things hit, other tools must be combined with willpower. As Duhigg discusses in the *Power of Habit*, we must create action plans before we are faced with stressful situations.

- Dispute early beliefs created by old thought processes, and displace them with superior truth.

- Addiction is a slippery slope, and if left to simple will-power, one is likely to relapse and become disappointed. However, when combined with appropriate tools, such as internet monitoring software and the thought changing processes mentioned, will-power can be the motivation that moves you toward freedom.

CHAPTER TEN: Society no longer provides the invisible barrier

I had been working with Tom for some time. He came to me somewhat frustrated at the thought of possibly having to live the rest of his life with restricted internet access to help him stay free from porn. It was in this session that I introduced the thought to him that society no longer provides the invisible barrier it once did to keep its young men free from the temptation of porn. More of his story later, but for now let me draw an illustration of what I a mean by an 'invisible barrier'.

I grew up on a sheep and beef farm, and at our front gate (out on to the road), was a cattle stop. Now for those of you who don't know what I am referring to, a 'cattle stop' is a pit in the ground the width of the gate way by about 2m long and .75m deep. Across this pit were laid strong timber beams of about 100mm wide with gaps of about 100mm in between. We could drive over this, ride our bikes over it and even walk over it carefully. I do actually remember a couple of accidents where I misjudged my footing or tried to ride my bike across it on an angle. Both resulted in pain: when one's bike front wheel drops down between two of the beams, one flies over the handle bars, and when a boys legs drop either side of a timber beam ... well most of you guys just cringed and know the rest.

There is a reason to my self-indulgent 'blast from the past' childhood illustration so hang on in there.

For all intents and purposes a cattle stop looks like an open gate, however the stock (cattle etc) don't go through it. All other stock fences are vertical in nature, but the cattle stop is a horizontal, almost unseen barrier, that stock recognise as something they can't cross. Now the livestock don't really recognise the fact that beyond that cattle stop (yes it is called a cattle stop even though it is for other stock as well) is traffic travelling at 100km per hour that will most likely kill them if they collide with it. They just know in their brains that they can't negotiate over this.

Society used to provide such a barrier between our boys, teenagers and men and

the use of pornography. That barrier was the feelings of embarrassment, shame, and exposure that the individual would feel if they crossed that barrier to access porn. That barrier was walking up to a shop cashier and having them see what magazine you were buying, or entering the R18 section of a video store, selecting a pornographic video / DVD, and walking up to the cashier to pay for it. Now I KNOW lots of men had no problem crossing these lines, as proven by the success of the porn industry before the internet.

In the magazine shop the pornographic magazines were at the tops of the magazine stands, well above the eye level of most pre and early teenagers' natural eye line. Now, every boy with a smart phone, computer, or iPod touch is vulnerable to any pornographic image coming right before their eyes.

However, the point here is that that invisible barrier kept many, many boys and teenagers away from the youthful journey of curiosity into porn. In the internet age, that barrier no longer exists. There is no shop assistant looking at a boy buying a magazine when he clicks his mouse; there is no 'zone of shame' that has to be entered and left like a special room in a video store. All that has to be done is to just keep on clicking in private. There is no walk of embarrassment between a magazine stand and a check out, all that has to be done is walk into ones room and shut the door. No, society can no longer provide that invisible barrier.

For the men who want to break free of his habit or addiction, or the parent who wants to protect their children, it is up to them to create that invisible barrier themselves because our culture / society no longer does it for us.

> *So back to Tom's story. I was speaking with him one day when he was three months into marriage. He had naively believed that getting married would break the pull of porn over his life and was shocked to realise that one evening when his new wife was out he found himself on her computer going places he knew he shouldn't. He was using her computer because his phone and laptop were 'locked down' with anti porn filters. During our discussion he expressed the frustration of possibly facing a life time of having to have filters on his devices, or no internet access at all.*
>
> *It was at this point that I brought this truth into the discussion: society no longer provides that invisible barrier, so it is not defeat to have to enforce your own barrier, it is just smart! He found this incredibly helpful and paralleled it to recovered alcoholics who had to grieve social drinking*

with mates, and casual visits to the pub, because they know they cannot trust themselves in such a circumstance.

There was another interesting point that this young man shared with me. He has a number of friends his own age that didn't do porn as teenagers ... and they don't have any problem with it now. His brain had been trained to direct his male sex drive to porn, whereas they had learned to manage it in another way. He couldn't trust himself with unprotected internet access, whereas it wasn't an issue for them.

As I said in the introduction, this is not a book about morality, or right and wrong. It is about the freedom to choose, and the tools to enable change for those who want it. For the young 'soft wax' mind, the early introduction to porn can form a groove too deep to change by choice alone, and here's why. Each neuron in your brain can be connected to up to 10,000 other neurons. The process of forming those connections is much more intensive when young, and usually lays the foundation to what sort of person you will become. Of course, you change drastically over the course of your life, but some traits of your personality persist through the years. If accidentally (or otherwise) porn is introduced to your world at a young age, it creates a groove that can be just as persistent. In a sense, you cannot imagine your life without viewing porn because you've gotten so used to it. These unhealthy grooves can be formed from anything. For some it's porn, while for others it might be coffee, tobacco, or even alcohol. This makes changing the unhealthy attitude extremely difficult. Luckily, with the advent of NLP, CBT, and other similar effective techniques, we've learned how to deal with those issues and program our brains to a healthier outlook. But just wanting to do it is simply not enough. You need to take action.

Another point to make here on the subject of that 'invisible barrier' is that what one generation permits, the next takes as normal. Let me illustrate and then explain.

I grew up loving rugby; playing it until my late teens and watching big games on TV. Through all the years of playing, and then for a decade or so after that, 'lifting' in the lineout's was illegal. Lifting was when one or more players assisted a lineout jumper to jump higher to contest for the ball. As I said, this had always been a breach of the rules for which one got penalised (if they got

caught). After spending some time working in Uganda and returning to New Zealand, one of my priorities was to watch a game of rugby on TV; the first for far too long. I was quite astounded to see players being lifted in the lineouts to contest for the ball, and the referees allowing it. You see, in those years of not observing the game the rules had been changed: lifting was now legal and part of the game.

Young people growing up today and playing or watching rugby believe lifting is part of the game; it is normal. What one generation of rule makers changed, became normal for the next.

Now the point I want to make, and for you the reader to consider, is that the current generation of young people with their smart-phones, iPod touches, iPads, laptops and so on believe that unlimited access to the internet is normal. In fact, it is normal. I wonder what would happen if a whole generation of parents decided that the new normal was protected internet access for their children. If fathers had filters on their internet access **as normal,** and their children had the same. Could we actually start to see this rampant societal disease curbed? If parents of this generation made this change, it would be natural for the next. That's a brave statement, and possibly an unrealistic hope, but let me remind you, that if nothing changes ... nothing changes.

Now I remind you, this is not about morality, or right or wrong; it is about the freedom to choose when the brain is developed enough to choose. For the young male brain introduced to porn in that sexual awakening stage, it is almost as though they have no choice; the porn industry is making that choice for them.

Quick Tips In This Chapter:

- The invisible barriers created by society once kept porn from being so easily accessible. For example, there is no longer a need for an embarrassing trip to the check-out line after choosing a magazine. The internet, without any filtering software, eliminates the natural barrier so that we must create one on our own, should we find ourselves struggling.

- Cultural ‘norms’ change throughout the years. In the 50’s, one couldn’t mention sex in public without a red face of shame. What one generation permits, however, the next will accept as normal. This has proven true for pornography as it becomes more abundant.

- With early exposure to pornography, one is likely to have habits that have been built upon for years. These habits are much too difficult for will-power alone to change, and the tools mentioned previously are of utmost importance to change these habits.

- If the 'new normal' was restricted internet access until the age of, say 18, could this rising tide of pornography addiction be stemmed?

CHAPTER ELEVEN: The Way into Personal Freedom

UNDERSTAND YOUR PROGRAMMING - Know it is your psychological programming that is blocking your ability to change.

"I see now that I really need truth in

the deepest parts of my psychological makeup."

Ps 51:6 (paraphrased)

Addiction strips away your freedom. As long as you can't control your urges, then you can never be free. The sad part is that in many cases the road to your addiction is not paved by you. That being said, you are still responsible for the outcome. You have the power to change, and if you don't do it, then that's on you. Classic psychoanalysis tends to blame it all on the parents and on early childhood development, but the truth is that we do have the power to change. Our very brains are wired in such a way that we can accomplish it. Change is not easy, but it's sometimes needed if we want to live fulfilling lives.

First, however, we need to be sure that we want to change. If you don't truly want to change, then you won't. You may try to fool the people around you for a while, and it might even work, but in the end you will always relapse to your initial state because you don't want to change.

In case you do decide that it's time to modify your world views and behaviour, once the process begins there is no turning back. Just like once you learn to read you can't 'un-learn' it, seeing the way your behaviour affects others cannot be 'un-seen'. Your motivation to change becomes pure, and thus you begin to alter your default programming.

Your default programming includes the mis-beliefs you hold around the use of

porn (Chapter 5), the justification factors you use (Chapter 4), the mental fusions that have formed(Chapter 7), and the self talk that comes from these. When your programming is broken down into these categories it can be disputed and altered through applying truth and reality to the innermost parts of your psyche. We use the approach of:

1. **Detect** the lie (the mis-belief, justification or fusion)

   It's time for you and the one helping you to become a relentlessly persistent and stubborn detective! It's just like in those murder mysteries, or high dramas involving the hero having to work out what is really going on so they can save the day. You have to keep digging and sifting through the evidence.

   Some aspects of your neural bonding that you thought would give you the breakthrough may not. Well, don't be discouraged by this. Be like Thomas Edison, who held firmly to the understanding that **every failure** encountered brings you **one step** closer to **success.**

   With persistence the primary suspect will be found!

2. **Dispute** the lie with truth, consequences and reality.

   Recognising the faulty thinking and beliefs is only the start. Now the fight begins by disputing this lie or misbelief with the truth about the situation and where this is taking you. Dispute, dispute, dispute. It is like having to drive on the opposite side of the road; your cognitive mind is having to dispute your programming constantly to keep you safe.

   By continuing the dispute with a superior insight, you eventually change your programming so that the unfamiliar (saying no to porn) becomes natural.

3. **Displace** the lie with truth: a new and real belief, or mental fusion.

   This is the outcome of the ongoing disputing of the erroneous thinking with truth and reality. The lie is displaced and no longer part of your default system.

At the risk of sounding repetitive, it's not your testosterone levels that are the problem, it's your brain. Fix the brain, fix the problem

IDENTIFY THE PAYOFF - Know what is in it for you

One of the reasons we don't change is because there can be a 'secondary gain' or pay-off to staying the same (Chapter 3). We subconsciously decide to remain as we are, as we experience certain benefits from staying loyal to our mistaken beliefs (Bourne, 2005). For example, rage may give us that false sense of power or control; anxiety may give us that false sense of safety; an addiction may give us a sense of comfort or de-stress us; resentful thinking may give us a sense of getting even, and so on.

So, "what's in it for me?" is the question every person seeking change has to ask themselves, as they reflect on what it is they want to change, and why they want this change to occur. This in turn gives us the insight into the benefit under the perceived sexual benefit and identifies the void that will have to be filled by another means if we are going to change.

Voids (vacuums) in our lives always seek out something to fill them. Whatever void is going to be created by stopping your use of porn has to be filled with another equally attainable alternative. Find the payoff, discover alternatives and put them in place before trying to go without.

BECOME PERSUADED OF THE DANGER of not changing

People can say they want change but the question is: to what degree? Change can be very rapid once we are fully persuaded.

When in a country that drives on the opposite side of the road we are fully persuaded of the need to change instantly. Why? Because it is too dangerous to stay the same. When a man or woman decides it is too dangerous (to either themselves or their relationships) to stay the same, they will change.

> *John had extremely rapid progress in his journey out of pornography addiction. It was a habit he had indulged since teenage years, and managed to keep completely hidden. Upon being found out by his wife, her look of absolute pain and betrayal was so etched upon his mind, that*

he instantly became fully persuaded he never ever wanted to cause her that sort of pain again.

BECOME CONVINCED IT IS THE POWER OF TRUTH THAT EMPOWERS PERMANENT CHANGE, NOT 'TRY HARDER'

"... you shall know the truth and the truth will set you free"

John 7:32

Our minds are made up of neurological pathways; patterns of thinking that have become familiar to us and are our default. They are like deep ruts on a muddy bike track. No matter how hard we try we can't seem to get past them without slipping in. That's what it is like in our mind. We slip into the familiar with ease. Our mind needs new insights to offer it another option, to correct the mis-belief, to form a new fusion, or arrest the fall into old patterns.

We call these insights *truth insights* or *positive affirmations*. We need to become fully persuaded that these insights are the truth we need. When we memorise and rehearse them over and over again they will become automatic. Therefore we will start to cut new grooves (neurological pathways) for our thinking to follow.

Without these insights our mind has no alternative response to offer either itself or our emotions.

BE PREPARED FOR A BIT OF PERSPIRATION - Change is hard work

Change requires mental and emotional effort. Trust must be risked and established. Where there's risk and effort, there's often disappointment. Why would you even bother to try? If something isn't broken, don't fix it, right? But that's the problem, something is broken, and you have to fix it. The good news is that there are steps you can take to make the process easier. There might be a lot

of work involved, but it’s worth it.

First you need to start with planning. Gather all the missing insights, get a coach, mentor or counsellor, do some reading, make some phone calls, and be prepared to pay the cost. Keep in mind that often the price you pay in order to recover from your addiction is much smaller than the cost of a potential divorce.

Next, memorise the new insights. The neurological grooves that you default to are very deep, and to offer your mind new grooves to go down it will take some time and effort. You need to start trusting your insights before they feel normal. You will also have to memorise them well and implement them every time you get an urge.

Once you master that, just imagine the most negative and embarrassing potential outcomes of your habit in order to create a strong emotional response against the habit.

Finally, turn to the most positive situations you can imagine that would result from your recovery. This process would set clear boundaries of what you want to avoid, what would get you there, and where you actually want to go. It’s not going to be easy to achieve, but it is worth it.

REALISE THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN YOUR EMOTIONAL MIND AND YOUR LOGICAL MIND

The emotional mind is the one that needs persuading to enable permanent change. It is the one that over-rides logic, awareness of consequences, and New Year’s resolutions. It is like a small child that wants its needs gratified immediately. It always looks for the path of least resistance. It looks for shortcuts and can’t take being inconvenienced. It’s the personification of all our basic instincts.

The emotional mind is only persuaded with the application of cognitive insights that are trusted in so strongly that they will over-ride the natural default. Think again of the illustration of driving on the opposite side of the road from what is normal; your emotional mind is screaming out “this is nutty, this is dangerous...” whilst your cognitive mind has to over-ride this with constant inner and even

verbal reassurances that “this is safe”, “this is where the traffic comes from now”, etc.

Quick Tips in This Chapter:

- Permanent and sustainable change is only possible when the one willing to change has fully prepared himself. Until we have quality insights and skills that we didn't previously have, we can't change habits we were unable to change previously.

- Our earliest beliefs are often the strongest, so they must be surfaced and disputed.

- Adults don't usually change, until the pain of staying the same outstrips the pain it takes to change. Visualize your consequences to begin your changes sooner, rather than later.

- The cost of some addiction counselling is much cheaper than the cost of a divorce, so it is worth realising your addiction and conquering it. It is much better to improve your marriage and gain freedom from addiction, than to allow addiction to cause more harm to your life.

- Understand what is in it for you. Find easily attainable alternatives to fill the void that will be created in your life when you break the habit.

- Allow yourself to be fully persuaded by your new beliefs.

- Understand that trying harder doesn't accomplish anything without the correct tools.

- Be prepared to put forth mental and emotional effort.

- Visualize the difficult situation and practice the proper self-talk and inner reassurances necessary to deal with it.

CHAPTER TWELVE: A Strategy for Moving Forward Into Freedom

"If you fail to have a plan, you plan to fail"

As I bring this book to a close, everything within me wants to lay out 'five steps to freedom', or 'six rules for success', or some other simple solution for the person caught in this consuming addiction. Reality and experience tells me that it isn't that simple. What I have sought to do in the preceding chapters is help you on a journey of discovery and understanding. The journeys of the characters studied, in conjunction with the principles covered, are there to show and illustrate the road to freedom.

Understand that the key to power is to gain knowledge, to add understanding to that knowledge, and then to add the application of that understanding. Let me illustrate.

I am sure that mankind very quickly gained the knowledge that streams could be damned up by building barriers of rocks or soil to stop the free flow of the water. When such barriers broke, the water was released with greater force than the normal flow of water, or when that reservoir of water was funnelled into a more concentrated flow it had more power. Mankind's knowledge and understanding was growing. Then as civilization developed this understanding was applied in so many ways. Be it to turn a water wheel or a hydro-electrical turbine, or some other use of the force of water, man harnessed knowledge, understanding and application in order to bring about change and development.

As New Zealand was being developed, a lot of timber was being felled in isolated and rugged areas. One of the ways of getting the logs out from these places was to build temporary dams, moving the logs into the downstream areas and then suddenly releasing the damned up water. The wall of water surging down the valley below picked up huge logs and took them down to rivers where they could be more easily retrieved for milling.

Knowledge combined with understanding, applied in the right way, produced

power.

In the same way this book has been about giving knowledge as to how one's neural bonding and programming has held them in their addiction. I have then given understanding as to how this is working against you, BUT more importantly, how new neural bonding can work for you in breaking the hold of your addiction.

Freedom will come through the application of the understanding gained in this book. It will come through you identifying with the journey of others in this book, understanding the neural bonding that has happened in their lives, and applying the principles learned to your life.

So let's now lay out a strategy for you to move forward into freedom.

Overall, we've discussed the preparation necessary for your brain to begin its journey to freedom. We've discussed why your brain tricks you when you try to change a habit, and how we can form new habits. We also discussed that just changing habits doesn't guarantee they will 'stick', and we have addressed self-talk and how to be prepared for the inevitable temptation. With your therapist, coach, mentor, loved one or accountability partner, follow the six-step strategy listed below as you begin your journey to freedom. Reference key points of prior chapters, especially the 'Quick Tips', at the ends of each one, so that your tools remain sharp, and the path to freedom remains fresh in your mind.

1. *Discover the reasons under the reason, the beliefs, fusions, triggers, and justification factors that are supporting this habit.* Find out what the 'other' need is that porn is meeting in your life. Until you do this, it's like trying to put a fire out by sucking in the smoke. I suggest you may need to go to a counsellor who understands and uses CBT, NLP and similar. Once the faulty programming has been discovered, then insist on your counsellor providing you with new deep reassurances and insights to counter this deeply ingrained programming. I am sorry to say this, but if your counsellor isn't prepared to write down key insights and strategies from your session/s, then how do they really expect you to be practically empowered to change?

I suggest you read this book again now and seek to apply the principles and insights gained to your journey.

2. *Know you triggers.*

Write out an honest list of your triggers, and know that when any of these are present you cannot trust yourself.

3. *Develop alternatives.*

Once you know 1) where and when you are vulnerable (your triggers), and 2) what this habit is doing for you (the payoff), then you can develop alternatives so the mind doesn't take you back there.

These alternatives must be readily available when a trigger is being experienced. It's no use deciding you will take a walk on the beach to de-stress, instead of using porn, if you live an hour's drive from the beach. The alternatives need to be at hand and easily accessible; just like porn.

Write out a list of the possible alternatives you can go to for the need to be met.

4. *Do the practical.*

Restrict your internet access. Use a software package or internet providers that block dodgy sites and then reports to others if you go there on your PC. Lock down your computers to unlock your freedom. Same goes for your smart-phone

Change your habits, the ones that see you sitting alone at your computer when vulnerable. Change your desk at work if necessary so others can always see your screen.

Put your PC in a public area of the home.

Have those alternative activities readily at hand.

5. *Find an accountability partner.*

Find someone who you will be completely honest with and one who will talk you past the temptation. Remember accountability partners are only

as good as your honesty.

6. *Be prepared for the disappointment of falling back into old patterns as the new ones become stronger*. Just because you fail doesn't make you a failure, nor does it mean you aren't making progress. Diagnose the 'falls', learn from them, and add your learning to the arsenal of knowledge, insights and strategies you need to defeat this giant.

CONCLUSION

Thank you again for downloading this book.

I hope this book was able to help you to start your journey towards understanding and conquering your pornography addiction.

The next step is to keep putting the new tools and strategies you have learnt into action.

Finally, if you enjoyed this book, then I'd like to ask you for a favour, would you be kind enough to leave a review for this book on Amazon? It'd be greatly appreciated!

Thank you and all the best as you apply these truths on your journey to freedom.

Paul Crawford

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